

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A pellet comprising a compacted inner matrix and at least one coating, wherein the inner matrix comprises particles comprising at least one carbohydrate selected from the group consisting of maltodextrins, starches, low molecular weight sugars, hydrocolloids and combinations thereof embedded with 10^5 to 10^8 viable micro-encapsulated micro-organisms per gram of pellet, wherein the inner matrix contains the at least one carbohydrate in an amount from 40% to 70% by weight of total dry matter of the inner matrix; ~~of the at least one carbohydrate,~~ and the inner matrix, before or shortly after the coating, is ~~characterised by~~ has a water activity of below 0.3, and the coating comprises a moisture barrier in an amount of about 8% to ~~about 18% by weight~~ of the compacted inner matrix, ~~characterised in that the pellet has~~ having a volume of at least 0.02 cm^3 .

Claim 2 (canceled):

Claim 3 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the inner matrix has an envelope density of more than 0.8 g/cm^3 .

Claim 4 (canceled):

Claim 5 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the inner matrix further comprises at least one component selected from the group of fillers, functional ingredients, lubricants, plasticizers, food-grade binders, and combinations thereof.

Claim 6 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the inner matrix further comprises ingredients selected from the group of digestible starches, resistant starches, other

fibre, milled cereals, dried and milled vegetables, cellulose and cellulose derivatives, pet food, maltodextrin, chicory flour, protein isolates, yeast extracts, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 7 (original): Pellet according to claim 1, wherein the coating comprises a food-grade moisture barrier.

Claim 8 (previously presented): Pellets within a food product, wherein the pellets are the pellets according to claim 1 and the inner matrix of the pellets comprises at least one component of the food product.

Claim 9 (previously presented): Delivery system of probiotics, which comprises the pellets according to claim 1.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The delivery system of claim 9, wherein the delivery system comprises a food product selected from the group consisting of moist, semi-moist, semi-dry, and combinations thereof.

Claim 11 (currently amended): A process for obtaining pellets to supplement a food product with 10^5 to 10^8 viable micro-organisms per gram of pellet, ~~which comprises the steps of the process comprising:~~

mixing a ~~first~~ preparation of micro-encapsulated micro-organisms and ~~40% to 70%~~, by weight of total dry matter, of at least one carbohydrate selected from the group consisting of maltodextrins, starches, low molecular weight sugars, hydrocolloids and combinations thereof, wherein the micro-organisms are embedded in the at least one carbohydrate,

drying the ~~first~~ preparation to form particles having an Aw below 0.3 ~~using a drying technique selected from the group consisting of spray drying, fluidized bed drying, and combinations thereof, the at least one carbohydrate being in an amount ranging from 40% to 70% by weight of total dry matter of the particles~~ mixing the particles and further components to form a second preparation, drying the second preparation to an Aw below 0.3,

compacting the ~~second-preparation particles~~ under pressure to obtain uncoated pellets compacted inner matrix comprising a volume of at least 0.02 cm^3 , and

coating the uncoated pellets compacted inner matrix with a moisture barrier in an amount of about 8% to about 18% by weight of the uncoated pellet compacted inner matrix to produce a pellet.

Claim 12 (canceled):

Claim 13 (previously presented): A food product comprising the pellets according to claim 1, wherein the food product and the inner matrix of the pellet share at least one component, ingredient or constituent.

Claim 14 (previously presented): Particulate food, food additive, supplement or pharmaceutical product consisting of a mixture of at least two types of particles, one being the probiotic pellet according to claim 1.